

Transcript George Hampton Interview

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newark, people, junius, happened, gibson, city, sharpe, called, rutgers, point, talking, running, years, mayor, ba degree, starting, hired, white, community, black

SPEAKERS

Robert Curvin, George Hampton

Robert Curvin 00:09

Recording now, okay, and let me start by just having you introduce yourself and say who you are. Okay,

George Hampton 00:18

George Hampton.

Robert Curvin 00:19

Yeah. And were you born in Newark?

George Hampton 00:22

Basically, I was born in Atlantic City. And raised a little bit between Atlantic City and Pleasantville. Up until the time I was 10 years old. And from 10 on I left Pleasantville, a place called Pleasantville to move up. And to come to Newark, New Jersey hoping we could we could get into projects trying to move up.

Robert Curvin 00:47

(unintelligible) move into the housing project. And did you get into the projects?

George Hampton 00:52

No, we, they never let us in.

Robert Curvin 00:54

You didn't have the right connections.

George Hampton 00:55

Didn't have the right connections to get into Newark projects at the time.

Robert Curvin 00:58

And so what grade were you in at that time?

George Hampton 01:01

My first year here I was in fifth grade 10th. Fifth grade.

Robert Curvin 01:05

At what school?

George Hampton 01:06

Miller Street School on Miller street, Clinton place. From Clinton Place I went to South Side, south side, Rutgers Newark, so all of it was you know right there. Right here in Newark.

Robert Curvin 01:20

Now you did a master's at records as well.

George Hampton 01:22

I have a BA degree.

Robert Curvin 01:23

You have a BA.

George Hampton 01:24

I have a BA degree. And a lot of folks assume that I have higher degrees I've been called doctor or many others ask me am I a lawyer. Truth is I have a BA degree. And that BA degree took, uh, well, I should have graduated in 71. But because of the take over and Ken Gibson and a bunch of other stuff. I didn't graduate till 75. In urban planning, urban Studies.

Robert Curvin 01:47

Yeah and while you were in school, even as a youngster, what were your ambitions?

George Hampton 01:55

When I first school as in how far back?

Robert Curvin 02:00

You know back to grammar school.

George Hampton 02:01

Really? Grammar school, grammar school. Well, I always worked. I was raised by my mother. And she had two other I have two sisters. I'm the oldest and, and grammar school, I used to, you know, shine shoes. I did my I bought my own clothes, did the whole nine yards, and bring home money to my mother. And in the course of doing that my ambition. I used to work, part of it was in a barber shop. And I said, you know, being a barber is not a bad idea. So when I was in grammar school, I think there was really a period when I thought, you know, maybe I should be a barber or something like that. By the time I got to high school in high school, I became you know, my academics were always very good.

And I ended up being, of course, on the super honor roll. And also student council president in my junior and senior years, I was student council at South Side. Yeah, so we had a 1600 body that had to vote for me, I guess. And that was pretty cool. But in the course of doing that also grabbed a lot of leadership skills and also recognized my other talents. So when I went to while in high school, I was working at Frank and Barney's Meat Market, cutting up chickens. And the idea then was you know, of course, I was going to go to college. For me, there was never a doubt about college. And I think it's because my teachers had put that in my brain. And I saw that I was academically. I did academically better than I, you know, I'm trying to be humble here with all the kids that I graduated number five out of 357 students. And two of the people who were in front of me were were general, they had general courses where we had coll- not only college prep, but we were the special classes, but college prep, which was given us precalculus and things like that at South Side back in those days. So I was always upset that these two people graduated in front of me. The one person who was number three, I mean a number four. Was, is still to this day, a very good friend of mine, I always talk about him and complained that he beat me out by--- I was five, he was four. His name is Claude Singleton. We're friends to this day. He also went to Rutgers with me and a bunch of other things.

Robert Curvin 04:23

Now you were in, you're talking about the years.

George Hampton 04:27

These are in the 60s.

Robert Curvin 04:28

And you had good teachers? Yes. And they were concerned they were fair and unbiased.

George Hampton 04:36

Most of them yeah. So but by then, but by the 60s though South Side it was pretty black. I mean, there were white kids and a couple of the white guys used to hang with us and we used to they were our token whites, you know, the boys you know, I'm thinking of one Alan Bob (?) in particular, he was Jewish, but we taught him how to dance and how to hang out and how to dress. And you know, we accepted him we he was our token white boy. So it was primarily a Black school. There were Whites there. But I thought I had very good teachers. And the majority of well not maybe I'll say 50/50, were, you know, Black versus White teachers back then maybe about 50/50, maybe 60/40, maybe 60% of whites still. But I had very good teachers.

Robert Curvin 05:25

And the quality of the schooling was good? And-

George Hampton 05:28

I was told from others that the schooling was bad. I mean, Newark. I mean, I got that perception of being Black, that you always have inferior schools and everything else. But I felt that the quality of the school was pretty good until I went to Rutgers the first year. And what I mean by that is, it was such a shock, because the riot was 67. I graduated in 67. So June of 67, I'm graduating from South Side High School. The riot was the summer of 67. I think it was July, August, July of 67. And in September, I'm

going to Rutgers Newark. So that was a big super big transition here. But at South Side, like I said, I graduated number four out of 357 students, I was super honor roll, not honor roll, super honor roll, and I got all and I got all the gifts and awards and all that other stuff. And the reason I went to and I had gotten scholarships to a lot of other places. The reason I went to Rutgers, though, was because of a woman named Bessie Hill. And Bessie Hill was on the board of governors had- Rutgers Board of Governors at Rutgers had decided that there needs to be more Blacks in the schools or whatever. And she had gone to apparently apparently, in retrospect, I didn't know what was happening then. But in retrospect, she had gone to different campuses and was looking for talented black kids. And she was the one I met her and she pulled me in and I saw her trying to decide whether I should go to New Brunswick or whether I should go to Newark, and she was the one that decided that I should go to Newark. Now I had been given scholarships to you know, Black colleges, couple down there and things like that. But I, I ended up at Rutgers Newark because Bessie Hill put me there, I mean, that's, that's the reality. And this is a big, the closest thing to a mentor of D_____, my mother did hadn't graduated out of college, hadn't graduated out of high school. So that isn't where it came from. Although she always did very (?) good for me, she couldn't keep up with my studies or anything like that. Nonetheless, that year, though, from June, at Southside, to September, at Rutgers was a super big opening. Why, you know, it just, it was such a mad amazing thing for me, because, first off, I was used to taking the hardest courses at Southside and breezing through them. So, college, you know, that's gonna be the same thing, you know. So I took, you know, five credit math courses and four credit English courses, as opposed to the three credits and assumed that I was gonna breeze through it. Now, meanwhile, we were taking over buildings and you know, I mean, we did all the CORE (?) stuff and you know I was right there, you know, with all of that till a couple years later, Vicki Donaldson, I and Doug Morgan (?) became the chairman of CORE (?). So I mean, we were right we were trium___ was what it was called back then. But we were right there, you know, I was right there in the midst of all that stuff. And my grades just ---. Next thing, you know, every every end of semester, I'm like, am I gonna, you know, get through to the next semester. The reality was, I learned very quickly, and I've said this many times before, that it became clear that white kids were not more intelligent than me, they weren't more intelligent than I was by any means. But they clearly were more prepared than I. And that's the big difference. So it took me all that time to answer your question from way back about South Side. There was just no comparison. And then uh, other things I learned about white kid kids was they did all the all the negative things that TV did not - My impression of white kids was, you know, Leave It to Beaver and you know, something about Donna, Donna Reed and you know, all and you know that in all that nicey nicey stuff that was on TV wholesome family. First year at Rutgers, it shocked the heck out of me. I mean, you know, really, it was just amazing to see. And so those white kids were more prepared, but they cheated. They lie. I mean, I'm talking about you know, as far as trying to get over and they had all these negative characteristics that I wasn't-- I just thought we had those negative characteristics. Well others, you know, and myself. I digressed, I guess, but that's my long way of answering your question about the differences in the school system. Clearly, they were more prepared than I was. It took

Robert Curvin 10:12

You mean more prepared, you mean, they, they had more breadth of their training, they knew how to study, they knew how to prepare for test, things of that kind?

George Hampton 10:24

And they came with more in the first place. When I, you know, computers were just starting out, when, when I was there, and I remember enjoying going over to everything, namely, computers were huge. We had to learn things like Fortran, statistical packages, ST, SPSS, and things like that. But that was all in the beginning of what computers could do. But my point is, is that I see the same thing happening today. In their homes today, you know, white kids will have little, you know, textbooks of their own, they have their own computer, the father has a computer everybody, the mother, you know, everybody's educated and the whole nine yards. In the homes of black kids in Newark, you know, no one's you know, at most was--

Robert Curvin 11:09

Let me ask you this though. Are you talking about race or class or economics?

George Hampton 11:17

Both.

Robert Curvin 11:17

You're talking about both.

George Hampton 11:18

I really think it's both. I think back in those days, it was clearly a function of- Well, in retrospect, me looking now at what's going on then, college kids coming from White America, if you will, were clearly more prepared, whether they black, white, or purple, but they were clearly more prepared than anybody else. But those college kids from White America were clearly more prepared than college kids from Black America. Meaning that and by preparation, because you're asking me the world (?) preparation, I meant they had been exposed their brains had been exposed to superior teachings to superior learning skills. And it had superior, you know, well, calculators were in, you know, starting to get into, they had calculators. I mean, you know, at the time we didn't have 'em. I mean, you know, you know, things of that nature. So they had, they were, you know, they had better tools, they had better, er, better learning tools that I think Black America had period. But the other side of the coin was, I was also poor America. Now, I'm when, you know, my first year at Rutgers, one of the other reasons why I was able to get scholarship, not I got scholarships there too, but not just scholarships, I got grants. Was because every time I wrote down, I'm on welfare. We were on welfare. I mean, the reality is, my mother was the one who, you know, I brag about it, my mother would whip my butt if she was around, to hear me, you know, tell people that we were on welfare, but we were, you know, we were on and off welfare. She would work as much as she could, you know, last hired, first fired, and then she would get laid off. And we, you know, she tried for a long time. But the reality is, we had to end up on it until she got another job. Or in this case, I was when those things happened, I was in school. So in college, and it was, so I was poor, very poor. You know, but you know, that was then. I ain't poor now.

Robert Curvin 13:18

So let me ask you about the city, and you know, your recollections of the city at that time. And you were just actually coming of age.

George Hampton 13:28

So I was we're talking 18, around 18.

Robert Curvin 13:31

You got kind of politicized right, at Rutgers?

George Hampton 13:37

That's right.

Robert Curvin 13:37

Yeah. And then from there, when you left college, you went to work in the Gibson administration?

George Hampton 13:44

Yes. Well, Gibson administration was in between, keep in mind, I was supposed to graduate in 71. Yeah, by the time 71 came- meaning four years would have been 71. But by the time 71 had come, Gibson had already run for office, we had all stuff we wa- the politics took over for me. And quite, I didn't even realize what was happening at the time now being almost 62 I can look back and see it. But what happened was politics took over in the sense that between the campus all those things that were going on in the campus, all the stuff about welfare rights, all these, you know, the Black Civil Rights movement, all of that getting Ken Gibson to run for office, getting him in office. So you know, I was right there, as well as everybody else doing, you know, before he got in office, and I ended up because of Gibson winning, I actually seems to me I ended up working close to I almost want to say before he- before Mayor Addonizio actually left office, meaning that-- during the transition period. Now here's why --- now these conversations you need to have with Junius Williams because his memory is better than mine. But the truth what happened was Gibson I know hired Junius and Junius hired a guy named Don Bernard, and a guy named Elliot Warning. And me. And we were so we were early on working in what was called Interim Assistance. And it seemed like Addonizio was like maybe maybe he was just being, you know, leaving, maybe he left in, I guess what, in December, and maybe I got hired in January.

Robert Curvin 15:33

Well, you were working in the Model Cities Program, then.

George Hampton 15:35

It was called in Junius had model cities, but he also had something called the Interim Assistance Program. And so he had Don Bernard be the director of (unintelligable). Don Bernard now is the African American parade grand -- Don Bernard, and myself, Don had hired me through Junius to run interim assistance, Interim Assistance, Model Cities was Springfield Avenue North as a dividing line, Interim Assistance was Springfield Avenue South. Over to more or less, at least Clinton Avenue, possibly, Lyons Avenue, I can't quite remember anymore. So we ran the programs on that side of town. So what happened was b- my education, I was now I found myself being 21 years old, 20, 21 years old without a college degree. But having had three years of college, and three years of accredited coll-, I had four years of schooling, you know, and running these programs for the city of Newark without a, without a degree. I did that for about two of the, two, three years. By the time 73, 73 ish 74, 74 came around, I was running rat and pest control, I always tell people to "Yay! I Was A Rat King of Newark, you know,

because I ran and pest control. But now, but again, I'm looking back. And when I say I feel obligated to say it wasn't just me, it was a bunch of us kids, you know, around at that time doing these things, you know, and so like today, I'm not impressed with the Cory Booker's of the world that- I'm not I don't take it against them. I'm just simply saying. We did all this stuff back and young kids coming city government taking over doing things we had done back in, in the 70s. And there were a fair number of us. So I'm at Rat and Pest Control. This is like a, you know, million dollar program, you know, back then, you know, and it was a staff of 50 people, you know, I mean, you know, and I'm running this thing. I was deputy director, Deputy Director, and then the director had issues. So I've ran it for a while. But I also thought and I was back and forth with school back then I was still doing part time. But I decided I used to freak people out. Because I knew too much information about rats and roaches. It would scare people how much I knew. And the reason I knew it, because I would read about it. You know, I would study it like anything else. That's what I always did. So that's what made me say I need to go back to school, and learn something else learn another book, because I'm scaring too many people, and I didn't want this to be the rest of my life. My new goal - the money. Hell 73, 74, I was making like, 12,000 you know, \$13,000 a year, man. I mean, you know,

Robert Curvin 18:36

That was a big deal.

George Hampton 18:37

That was a big money. I was 74, yeah, I was driving today, if this were today. This would be - I was driving a car, you know, car that would be worth about, you know, 56, \$60,000 today, because then you know, that's what you took all your money and you put it in the car. And I mean, that's what my upbringing was. And so yeah, I was driving a (Mark 3???)

Robert Curvin 19:05

Let's talk a little bit about Gibson. And

George Hampton 19:09

Back then or now3?

Robert Curvin 19:10

Back then, back then as as the first elected black mayor of the city. What are your recollections and and how did he do?

George Hampton 19:25

Being an older guy now being 62 looking back, I say I guess he did the best he could, for who he was.

Robert Curvin 19:34

And who was he?

George Hampton 19:34

A a person of circumstance. As I see it, I see him as one who was put in as the compromise candidate or whatever. And there was enough about him, I think, to you know, get enough folk to rally around in

the politicians to rally around him to get him in. The bad side if you want to say if I need to say it that way was I was very disappointed being being at being an idealist very idealistic, 23 year old, 22 year old, and had assumed, frankly, that the entire not only Gibson and that's why I'm saying it isn't just Gibson, but the entire older folk would have uh, older folk would have embraced the young folk far more than what they did. In fact, they were quite, they turned out to be afraid of us. And now in retrospect, I guess, you know, again, being 62, looking back, I can understand why they were nervous of a Junius Williams who kept jumping in front of the (unintelligable) in terms of a camera and things like that. I mean, you know, we we were ready to run Junius for Mayor pretty early on. But we were doing it as - you know, it's weird that people don't understand that. We weren't doing it as fun. Or, I was, you know, this is the thing to do. This is still just continuing the movement, I thought, and then being in my 20s, early 20s, that the older guys would have said, "Oh, these sharp, these guys, these young kids are sharp and they would have stepped back and would have joined or would have groomed us for greater and better things. I did not expect them to crush us, sort of push us back. When it comes to Gibson direct, Elton Hill became my personal mentor, in the sense that even though they fired Junius got rid of him and everything else. Elton always liked me. And I, by this time, incidentally, I'm married, a son, you know, and I need to be working and you know, got all caught up into that too. But the point is, so Elton was the one who got me from Interim Assistant to go over to Rat and Pest control in the first place. And he was always my mentor, Elton Hill. But on the other hand, I saw how these guys were limited. I'm trying to be careful in my wording here. I'm hoping you'll edit it right. But they were limited intellectually-

Robert Curvin 21:58

Since they were over their head, given the challenges that they faced.

George Hampton 22:02

No question as far as government and the running and things, no question. And when I and so they all were shrewd politicians for the time. And they always thought politically that was always, that frustrated me. But my point about Gibson I - this is very important to me. What So during those years, when I should have graduated in 71, versus graduating in 75, I always stayed with Rutgers, but I ended up taking full time work. And so I'd go at night, or I'd go during the day, you know, or until that last year, which was 74, 75 I actually left, I quit working and went to school full time for one year, took 50 credits, graduated in that one year and was on the Deans List. I'm sorry, I took 15 credits, and grad- 18 credits, I said. Yeah, there were a lot of I had to make up a little bit more than 12. So maybe it was either 15 or 18 and graduated in that one year. One, and I was on the Dean's list and everything else. But my point is, is that while I was there working in administration, I then also worked for it was called the Office of Newark studies. And that's when like the Bob Ottenhoff we were talking about, that's where I met Bob Ottenhoff, Rich Roper was running it was running it,

Robert Curvin 23:23

Was deputy actually, Jack Krauskopf was running it.

George Hampton 23:25

Jack Krauskopf was was running it. And I'm Jack Kraus- and then Richard left and went over to the mayor's office, I think, or went to Trenton either one or the other. Can't quite remember. But my point is, so Jack Krauskopf was my boss. And then Richard came back is what happened. That's what

happened. Because when I was there, it was Jack Krauskopf, Bob Ottenhoff was in there. And the program that I took on was Residential Mortgage Lending. The term was called redlining back then. So I want I dived into this thing about redlining and finding out where banks were putting their money where they weren't putting their money and things of that nature. And that was my claim to fame, in the sense that I did the first analysis of redlining in the state of New Jersey and one of the first in the entire country out of about probably, I think six out of six, there might have been five other cities that had done something before I had and then later on, it got to be a big deal for others. So I did that report. I showed where the mortgages went and where they didn't go, and I never called it redlining. I called it a residential mortgage lending because in reality, well, I won't give all the details.

Robert Curvin 23:28

Do you have a copy of that report?

George Hampton 24:36

I'd like to find that report. I do have some of my own reports. And that was my first one. I'm frankly, I meant to bring some reports here today, ran out the door, I didn't think about it, well I'll get you some of the reports.

Robert Curvin 24:46

That would be an important one if you could find it for me to see.

George Hampton 24:49

I will I will I will find out where that's at. Anyway, I stayed there and then I left and went to uh Trenton. But the point I want to make about Gibson. So here I put my heart and soul in this document. And, you know, by then I had my skill set because I'd been at Rutgers, I've done urban planning, urban studies. I used to argue with my teacher, I had had the my urban experience came from working in the city government. Now I'm at Rutgers with these, you know, these academic academicians running around. And you know, these teachers with these young little 26 year old professor, you know, 30 year old professor, I'd sit there, I'm 24 and I'd argue with them in front of the class and spank them, you know, and I'd still get an A, you know. So, but I'm at Rutgers. I'm also at office of Newark studies, which I've been to this day trying to get repeated cuz I thought it was so important. But anyway, I did the redlining study. Jack Krauskopf takes it, you know, polishes it, you know, I'm cool with that. And he said, You need to see the mayor. So Jack brings me in to meet Ken Gibson, and the two of us. Now the mayor sees me, hey, this is George Hampton. I'm a black kid from right down, you know, Miller Street, you know, back then I lived on Gillette place, you know, Ridgewood Avenue Newark, you know. I'm sitting here in this with the mayor. And I did this very, very powerful study, I analyzed 26 banks in the city of Newark, and where the money went, how do you do that? Anyway, I did it. So I'm sitting here, very proud of myself. And the mayor listened and, you know, (unintelligible) but Jack was clearly this is George Hampton, I want you to know, George, okay. We went through that. And I knew there was going to be a follow up. Mayor or Jack, who was one of the other took that report, they sent it to those 26 banks, and said to me, the Mayor would like to see you. And the next thing I know, there's this meeting with all these bank presidents coming to the Mayor's Office for the work that this kid did, you know, yeah, you know, knowledge is power. We went through all that. I'm like, happy as you know, a pig in slop. Meeting goes over. Next thing I know, no, no, right before the meeting goes over, then that's

when the mayor said, Okay, we are going to do a follow up of this. That's what he tells these presidents. And we're going to have to, you know, decide on how you guys are going to be able to, you know, provide money for the city and all that kind of good stuff. And for now on, I want to introduce you to Tom Acero, the white boy from wherever Tom Acero is going to take you know, you know, this your work, this work, he didn't say this to me, he said to the bank Presidents Tom Acero, now, is going to be, you know, do all the follow up on this project. And I just sat there and you know, I melted. And subsequently, what happened was, I ended up not doing much more with that project, the project had not, they held on to the thing for a long time, incidentally, they did not go public with it. What happened was, I now understand this better than I did back then maybe why they chose not to go public, you know, they wanted to negotiate, use it as a negotiating tool. But I went back with feeling like crap. And the bottom line was I ended up working in Trenton, Department of Environmental Protection. And while I was at the Department of Environment Protection, Rich Roper came back to the office of Newark studies, and during that during his tenure there, that's when they announced the report and everything else, but I'm down in Trenton by that point. So it just hurt the pain for me and it was a big lesson. I didn't learn all my lessons I should have but was that I didn't get any credit for it publicly, and that Gibson, you know, basically had squashed it. And he turned it over to some white guy named Thomas A- who had just was fresh in town- 23 year old white kid with a wig on I mean, you know. Anyway,

Robert Curvin 29:11

Now, what did Mr. Earl(?) have? To recommend him to do this that you didn't have?

George Hampton 29:21

Color is the only thing I can come up with

Robert Curvin 29:23

Color was the only thing he didn't have the any additional experience or knowledge?

George Hampton 29:28

No, no one knew more about redlining than me.

Robert Curvin 29:30

Sarah (?) didn't subsequently contact you and ask, you know how you?

George Hampton 29:34

No they took the document. The answer is nothing happened with that document for about six months. And by that time, things have changed in the Office of Newark studies. They all you know, all of us, everybody, all the young guys were moving around a lot and back then so it sometimes gets confused but I do remember that Krauskopf went somewhere. Well, Bob, I'm not again, you know, you went somewhere. Masero ended up doing some other stuff he was still around Dennis Sullivan was there, Rich Roper, I don't know whether he was at the mayor's office and came but I do know when the report was announced it was Rich that had announced the document and it was several months later on.

Robert Curvin 30:18

This is an interesting reflection on on Ken, which, in a way can porch with a lot of other things that I've heard from.

George Hampton 30:26

Oh, yeah, Junius, we told you that story, I think, yeah, Junius me and Bob Holmes went to the thing for Ken down. At the at the I'm talking recently, last year at the library. Oh, you were there that night? Oh, yeah. And when Ken started talking about bright young kids, me, Junius, Bob, first of all, it took a lot to convince Junius even to come. You know, but he, we were so impressed that Junius actually, Junius came. So we all sat together. And you know, as Ken started doing his accolades and talking about young folk, and that was there, and he said bright, smart young men is important to have, you know, we were like, any minute now we get ready to stand up. He said, Yeah, I need to I hired a lot of smart, I said, I hired smart young people or something like that. And we thought that was our cue. Instead, he then said, and Dennis Sullivan, and he just went on and on about how smart Dennis Sullivan was. And we just like it - So anyway, that was my took a long time, apparently, for me to tell you that. But that was my greatest disappointment with the Gibson administration. But but, you know, black, older blacks, at that time, that I that all of us thought were going to embrace us. They literally pushed us aside, and it was very telling to have been given our feelings of something that just happened last year. Junius Williams, you know, Bob Holmes, yeah, Julius Williams, Yale, Bob Holmes, Harvard, little George Hampton, rinky dink Rutgers but hanging with then on every level no matter what. And none of us got a, you know,

Robert Curvin 32:15

He never said thank you.

George Hampton 32:17

He never said, thank you. Yeah. Or acknowledgment.

Robert Curvin 32:20

No, no. This is a thing that comes up over and over again. I mean, I've interviewed Ted Pickney, and he talks about having some meetings with Ken, where he had some suggestions and things, and that Ken would just not act on anything. You said, you're gonna nod his head. Yeah, yeah yeah. But that was usually the end of it. Do you? Do you see any deeper lesson about this? In terms of how Blacks should look at political leadership? Or?

George Hampton 33:02

Oh, yeah. One, I think I've rapid quickly learned that politics is not all that one would think it is that politicians are nowhere near as powerful as we think they are. And that we need a lot more if we want to change, you know, our circumstances in a variety of ways. We have to do a lot more than just rely on on the old guards, you know, or old folk, for that matter, old folk for that matter. But I'm just period. My big at the time, we thought putting people in the office was going to make all these big changes within our society. And the truth of the matter has been that while there has been some I think, I think it's been better with the not having it. They also aren't that aren't as powerful as we have probably thought. I also think that there are just limitations to what people can do. I mean, regardless whether they're intelligent or not so intelligent, there's a lot of not so intelligent, quite frankly, politicians that are out there or have

other agendas. You know, that's the other point. Politicians think politically. And that can be a mistake, as far as trying to really, if you really, truly are about making change, thinking politically or thinking or solely thinking politically, might be a better way to say it can be a problem. You know, it takes a lot more than that to make the change. I don't know if that makes sense.

Robert Curvin 34:35

No, it does. But let me let me ask you this after after the Gibson years, and you didn't work for the city, for many you went you left. You left the city and went to work for the state.

George Hampton 34:48

Department of Environmental Protection

Robert Curvin 34:49

And then you went to the medical school -

George Hampton 34:51

and then from there I went to Gus Hindenburg, because what happened there and that's when I started realizing what politics meant. And it doesn't mean hard work and being bright is going to keep you keep a job. It doesn't or keep the job you have. This doesn't mean that but anyway, I went I left Ken Gibson left the city of Newark 75, 76. I graduated in 75 when I graduated 75 by 76 I went to work for the I had already quit City Hall. I quit in 74, I think 73 I've quit Rat and pest control I went to Rutgers that last year, I got my degree. While I was there, I was working through Office of Newark Studies at Rutgers. And then from the Office of Newark Studies, I went to Trenton that was about 76 or so. Working for the Department of Environmental Protection. I was executive assistant to the commissioner, who was a David Bardeen. I've worked for him. And that department for about two years. Dave Bardeen left to go somewhere else. I'm his assistant. And he used to tell me, "Go ahead." You know, he wanted me to be he was like an arrogant kind of guy. And he wanted me to take on his arrogance. And so I've got to tell that story because again I was a young, you know, you learn from being young. I'm 25, 26 years old. I'm dressed. I got my car up doing I'm looking good all great years. Any way. Dave Bardeen used to tell me. Look, George, you're too nice. You have to go and yell at people. You You know you're there for me. When you speak on my behalf. You got to make get their attention. You gotta hustle. You mean to tell me you want me to go and yell at White people? He, you know, yeah, basically, ooooh did I have a lot of fun. So I went around. Oh, I just yelled at White people all the time. Yeah, including commi-assistant commissioners in the department. I remember, her name was Helen, something who was a commissioner of Health. I want to say Helen Feeney. But it was something like that. And she was the Commissioner of Health at that time. And Dave Bardeen and I went to meet with her and he was yelling at her. And I was right there, "Yeah. And furthermore..." Okay, I'm telling you that because now it's two years later, but at all of meetings Dave Bardeen would sit there, I was immediately to his right, right here. And at this meeting, Dave Bardeen says, Oh, I just want everybody to assitant Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners, you know, all these big brand new Department of Environmental Protection. And I'm sitting there and he says, "Oh, I just want everybody to know that I'm leaving here in like, a month or something like that, I'm taking a job." I think he went to Washington, taking a job to go to federal, the EPA. I didn't hear it, that was the first time I heard it was right then. And so he left. And my days were clearly numbered after that.

Robert Curvin 38:01

They were after you.

George Hampton 38:03

I knew that I didn't have any ---

Robert Curvin 38:05

The protector was gone.

George Hampton 38:06

The protector was gone. I knew I didn't have any juice, but two things happen. One. I went on vacation for a month. And when I came back, there was a white boy sitting in my seat. And I made him get up and leave. But he was still he was sitting at my desk. But two when I used to send out emails before I would send out emails. And I was I remember this one woman had all these people working on the on the annual report. And it was it was really thick because it wasn't finished. It was you know, it was in a draft and I said I wanted to see the draft, they said but it's not ready yet for it's not ready for anybody mister. I want the - I want the draft and I want the draft now. So they had to go back and copy this thing. And back then it was you know when you make copies, it was a big deal in the- in the 70s to make a copy. I never even looked at it. I just wanted it because I wanted to talk to them (?). But I would send out these powerful emails and whatever I wanted people would give me well, Dave Bardeen gone. I'd send out an email and nobody would respond. I learned the hard way. I learned the hard way. But anyway, so I left there and left Dave Bardeen looking for a job. Bottom line. I left I left and for a while I left I didn't I wasn't working there. And Gus Heningburg one day said George, I hear you're looking for a job or something like that. Come and talk to me. I went to talk to Gus and I remember what he said to me that day too, which was and I felt good because he said, "There's a program called the local public works program a federal program called Local Public Works." New Jersey got this LPW two local public works two. New Jersey guy \$300 million. This was now I'm talking 78. I bought a house without, without having a job knowing I was going get it. I'm now living in Newark. House, the family kids, and he says local public works program to 300 million came to New Jersey, of that 10% there's s'poused to be a 10% set aside for minorities, small minority businesses and so forth, find out what happened to that money. So I said, Okay. And I did. And we wrote a report. And that's a nice thing. I can show you that report as well. And I was very pleased with I felt so good when he told me that he had to see for me it was the fact that first off, Gus was bright, you know, and all of that. And he clearly had intellect superior than any Black men that I knew, at that time. And the other thing was that he had enough respect for me, that he asked me to do something like that. So I said okay. And I went, and I found out what happened. And I showed where the money went, and where it didn't go and a bunch of other stuff. And the report was, he took that report, and I was beside him, then, you know, he, I saw governors calling him back and he, they created new programs based on it and things of that nature. But by that time, Gus, it was Gus, Senator Lipmann and Ken Gibson, who sent letters to Stan Bergen. It's now 79 ish or so let us to stay in Bergen. That said, you need to hire this, you know, bright young boy, you got all kinds of problems up there. And Stan Bergen took a look at, you know, and interviewed me. And within three months or so, I was hired to work for one and planning for for one of the Vice President and Vice President for playing I was I was hired to work under him who was scared of me like crazy. Once, I'll let

you ask me the next question. So let me have a look. That's how I got there. That was my transition- So at the medical school. You got involved in medical school development and expansion and so on- The very first report, I'm glad you asked me this, because now I'm gonna jump forward again. Okay. And I'm gonna let you know. Hope you don't use this stuff. But why I was angry. I was a little upset the day that Rich and Bob Johnson wouldn't let me speak at that meeting. Because the way I'm interpreting it, and this is I'm just maybe we shouldn't have all this on tape. But I'm interpreting --

Robert Curvin 42:53

Everything's gotta be on tape. We gotta, we gotta have the record. I'm - I said I want to have your story.

George Hampton 42:59

Okay, so now that we've established that, let's talk about where the medical school went. During that period of 70, 78 79. Well. My maybe you don't need that part. But you need to know why. I'll tell you the story behind it. But my point is, here, I'm not being allowed to speak. And I'm at the medical school when something when back in 79. I'm back in back in jump all the way back 1979 when his name was Norman Smith, my first boss, Dr. Norman Smith the vice, the president, vice president for planning was so afraid of me. He tried kept trying to put Bergen hired me, go work for him. He was afraid of kept running and hiding, putting him he wouldn't. He didn't want me to do any work. He would do everything. And frankly, he was trying to sabotage me. The first assignment he gave me was do the institutional master plan for UMDNJ. You got three months to do it. All right. Now, I'm hired. I know nothing about healthcare. I know nothing about higher education. This is a guy with a PhD, talking to a guy with a BA degree. All right. And the assumption on his part was clearly that I was going to fail. He wanted me to be able to fail, he wouldn't have had the power he wouldn't have had to. He would have liked to have been able to fire me, bottom line. Three months later, the institutional master plan for the entire uni-. You asked me about development. Yeah, I did development too sideline. All right. The institutional master plan for the entire University of Medicine and Dentistry was done in that three month period. Not because of my boss, who did my immediate boss who didn't want me to get it, you know, but because I had I had to learn very quickly to go over his head. I got the Executive Vice President Charles Vivi (?), to sign- all I had to do was to send letters, saying you know, I got Charles Vivie(?) to adopt the process. And I had him send it to all the deans and all the associate deans and said, "You will come to a meeting where the little black boy is going to be sitting there. And he's going to be telling you all what y'all got to do to get this report done in that period of time." That's why it got done, and it got done. And it was a good report, it worked and everything else. And I probably have a copy of that somewhere. But my point is, again, if I could do institutional master plans for the entire university, now, there's also a document while I was in that office that I did, which was, and I did a lot of times I would do these things, because I just did, I just liked doing it, the institutional master plan I had to do. But I did a plan called the UMDNJ's Facilities Master Plan, they never had a facility's master plan. And in that facilities master plan that I did, it shows where all those buildings, so the buildings were sitting in, and you know, you know, I had already projected where they should be, and a lot of those things happened, you know, come a long range plan. So the stuff will happen 5, 10 years later, you understand. So to me, I would think that when I, I like to think that when I speak on certain topics, I know what I'm talking other stuff I may not know about, but on certain things, I know what I'm talking about. And when it comes to, you know, facility stuff, when it comes to UMDNJ I know what I'm talking about, let me you know, say what I gotta say, I know my personality is also laid back, cool guy, that's always been an issue with folk too,

because I'm always cool. You know, I'm Newark Nikky Newark, you know, and I bounce and I act like, you know, hey (unintelligible). That doesn't mean that I'm not intelligent. In fact, a lot of people confuse the fact, you know, for being cool. With being that with a lack of intelligence. No, I'm just cool. Intelligent, too. And cool. I came in at my I remember, December of 1980, was when I actually was hired. That's what I call being hired. So I can talk to you about the 80s, the 90s. A little confusion, it mixed up, but I can talk to you about the 80s the 90s all up to today.

Robert Curvin 47:32

right. So tell me a little bit about the medical schools, emerging vision and relationship with the city of Newark.

George Hampton 47:45

Right. Bergen hired me. And recently, Norm Samuels just told that to Bob home today we had a meeting with him. He said, Well, Bergen hired you because you had to be the voice for the community. And for the medicals, I had, I had this dual role that I ended up playing. and I both enjoyed it. And it was very frustrating. While my my immediate boss couldn't handle me, the Vice President for planning couldn't handle me in with he had a PhD, but he was still dumb. Ultimately, I became vice president myself because Bergen promoted me frankly, it was 1988 with by, was when I actually became full vice president. I was assistant vice president, acting Assistant Vice President probably from around 75 through I mean I'm sorry, 85 through 88. I was like a long time to be an assistant when acting assistant vice president then I went to Vice President. But during all of those years, what happened was in 1984, my role was becoming, you know, obviously much more of a public role for the university. And I both would go to all the meetings, but everybody knew me, I already had, well you know, the background now. So I had already I knew everybody, I knew all the city council people. And I had access to them. I knew Senator Lipman. And, you know, I had access, I knew Gus Heningburg, you know, I knew, I knew, I knew I knew, and therefore, I would go to them on a variety of things. And also, they would come to me, and I would work to my doggonest to get to allow them to get anything that they thought were appropriate from the university. And at the same time, it allowed the university to be extended out into the community and through a variety of ways. And for Bergen it was good because like I said, well, there was some big meeting they were this was this is now post. You know, the school is now here and everything else and it's marching on. So now the Newark Agreements come into play and whether or not they're going to, you know, whether or not they're going to be acted, acted acted upon in a variety of ways at all. And we can have these discussions. And this is the part that I always find interesting because a lot of times, the programs that did happen, happened because people like me, not necessarily just me, but people like me, were pushing that from the inside, wherein the community may or may not necessarily have known that those things were going on. And or because it meant made political sense. So just find something else something new to complain about to get some more stuff. The community in my opinion, would find new things to, to address or target and complain about.

Robert Curvin 50:46

So there was continuing tension between the medical school and the community. Often, as you're suggesting, for no good reason?

George Hampton 50:56

I'd never say no, no, I'm not gonna use the words for no good reason. Oh, no, no, absolutely not.

Robert Curvin 51:00

Well, you said that they would just find something new to complain about. But that implies that they were just looking for things to complain about.

George Hampton 51:08

No. Well, I guess what I'm trying to say is as a strategy, it made sense. Okay, Junius, let's start with one. Junius is my man hey, you know this. On the other hand, I found that we were on opposite sides for a while, if you will, on an issue. Now, I represent the university. But that does not mean, my job was always to walk this line. And it was a very, I both enjoyed it but it was very frustrating, because, well, maybe I should bring you that document. I'll be damned if you do, damned if you don't. And what I mean by that is, is that while the community would constantly would say the university isn't doing things or or Bergen is, you know, racist, and the place is racist and blah, blah, and things of negative happening. I would do two things. One, I would make sure that if they had issues that I could get addressed, I would get those issues addressed. We did hiring, you know, I would make sure that certain hire people did indeed get hired when the resumes would come over. If, if they of course met the stuff. I did development. We did programs, we did the pre college program. I mean, I could go through a long, long list of things that the university's new programs that came about, because the community either if you will complained or said things need to be done. So that's that wasn't my point. I guess my point that I'm trying to make it is always one that that's difficult to make is is that I saw both sides of the of the of of these issues. And it was clearly an antagonistic way, or confrontational way that that both the community and to a large to some extent, the university as well felt had to be. That's how things would be addressed or not addressed, policy issues were addressed, through confrontation. And I was always in the middle of it. And I would be trying to bring in the community and at the same time recognizing that it would be value on this side. And or trying to convince these people on this side who's constantly saying George just keep them away from us. I'm no, I can't do that. You know, it was it was a tough line. It was a tough road to hoe. And there would be some in the community who would say George is an Uncle Tom. And that used to burn me up more than anything. I mean, nothing made me more infuriated me more than that. But on the other hand, people within the university said that damn George now he's doing something else for the damn community he never stops, you know. So that part bothered me. The part that made me feel good was that those who knew me and knew of my work, know that I was doing the right things at the right time. But there's always more people who don't know you than know you. And that's that's where my frustration would come. But I would watch, and I would be a scientist on stuff and on public policy. And what I mean by that is, it's one thing to say nobody in Newark gets to do any jobs. There's nobody hired at UMDNJ they never give us any jobs there. And I would go yeah, they never give us any job there. Let me go look this up. And then I'd do a study. Okay. 1400 people from Newark. People who lived in Newark worked at UMDNJ when I did my first study- 1400. And how were they arranged? According to lower- Lower levels, mostly lower levels, most lower levels, it was I think the amount of money was \$30 million a year what went in their salaries. I did ZIP Code analyses to find out where they actually lived. If I took those zip code analyses, and then compared it to different wards, different wards for each council person to see if indeed, those numbers made any sense. Now, what's my point? I would be scientific. So what I mean by that is, so where the community and I got, it's important that I explained this point to you. Where the community would say,

nobody works at UMDNJ, it would be emotional. And that's my point. And then I would explain, I learned not to not to go go out there and try to explain to them, I learned better than that. And I also learned that to try to even explain it all to the people inside I just (unintelligible). And after a while, I just did whatever I wanted to do. But here's my point. But I would show Bergen Look, here's 1400 people that make it 30 million a year. It's not that there's none now, but on the other hand, they're in the lower levels. That's your point. They're only lower level. And as another reality, as I kept doing the studies. I did I would do it for a couple of years, another reality would happen. The numbers started going down. But now the community would say the numbers are going down. Look at that, you know, if they knew, they didn't. I wouldn't go there. Because this is why the numbers are going down. But I would look at the numbers and say no, well, the numbers are going down living in Newark, yes. But that's because everybody is moving out of the city. And as those relatively you know that \$25,000 a year janitor, he met her a nurse practitioner who was making 35. And now notice I said that too. He met a nurse practitioner who was making 35 women were making more than the men, right? They get married, they now making, you know, 60 \$70,000 a year. They leaving in the city in droves. So while everybody else was le- while the middle class and then ultimately the Black middle class was running out of Newark like everybody else. I wouldn't bother with those kinds of details. Because, you know, it misses the point. And the point for the community was, you know, things are bad. It wasn't my place to always say, well, you didn't exactly say it, right. I would show them ways, if you will, or I would do things to push the community cause I'd never stop pushing the community cause but I would do it in a more scientific way.

Robert Curvin 57:36

I'm gonna put another tape in. And the question now is, were you at all involved with Sharpe, the Sharpe James administration? And did you have any interaction with Sharpe during those years?

George Hampton 1:12:03

All of them. The answer is is yes. There was a lot of things, when you say the administration during those years with the city and so forth and so on, the answer is throughout the city. Throughout the time I was at UMDNJ, I was working with members within the James administration directly and/or the city council, and/or, you know, legislators and others. So the answer the short answer is yes.

Robert Curvin 1:12:29

And give me some sense of how it was to work with them and the kind of vision they had and the politics that you had to deal with and dealing with the council. And so on.

George Hampton 1:12:46

The short answer for for for the James administration, and that means everybody, therefore, including council was, again, I was disappointed in their they all thought politically as a short, is the best way to say it. They thought politically and by politics to me, it meant, who's going to get what out of the project, as opposed to what is the best thing to do for for for the community. This is indeed where the whole issue of University Heights as an example, came about. Now here's what I do. First off, I take great pride I think by the end of the day, you're gonna sick get sick of me saying it, but I found my niche over all those years. And to me, my niche has been being an urban planner, or urban, that's what I call myself anyway. And if you listen to me, I think I'm the best there ever was alright, with a BA degree. But because of my experiences and tenacity, and I do have an intellect, I can go and study things better. I

competed against PhDs and I know I'm better. Here's my point. One of them was the concept of University Heights. Do you know where that concept came from? Well, let me answer the question. I had proposed to the for- as we go around all these years now CHEN is starting to emerge, and it's- the Council for Higher Education in Newark. Bergen started taking me to -- I -- now-- This is now the, uh, around 1984. 1984 is what it started is when I wrote the first master plan for University Heights, I wrote it and I named it University Heights master plan, and I gave it to Stan Bergen. This is when the four universities were starting to work together. Bergen and I had that document. Bergen took that report and sent it to Saul Fenster, Norm Samuels, Zach Yamba, and they met about it and they agreed that it was a good concept. Now, the concept of University Heights had a two fold purpose. Number one, for me, it was really: one, to rebuild the city of Newark from from starting from where I saw, it could where it could work to clean up these neighborhoods to improve the likelihood for people of color and anyone else to live in those neighborhoods and indeed have a better quality of life. Keep in mind, this was during the this is post Riot. This is 80s out migrations. Everybody's running away from the cities period. That's when I wrote that document. And in that document, I proposed that people need to understand universities are still invested in these neighborhoods, their populations at these universities are growing. And as those things happen, people are -- there are jobs here, they're going to need housing or should need housing, and a bunch of other things and a lot of other amenities. But people need to concentrate their efforts of work in that area. That's basically what the document proposed. The politicians, Ron Rice being one but all the others as well. And this is now I think this is pushing James time starting at the beggining (of) James time, as time goes on here, I get it confused. But the point is, now the politicians are saying I remember Ron Rice and others saying they remember the 60s. Everybody remembers the 60s, community remembers, the 60s. And they say now those damn universities are coming in here and they're getting ready to kick us all off the rest of the land and take it all for themselves. And Junius was one and a lot of others were, you know, rallying that flag. Now I understand emotionally and I guess intellectually on one side, maybe I say this wrong. I probably understand emotionally why they did it (unintelligable) they did it. But intellectually or from a knowledge base. I said they shouldn't do that. But I understood why. And Ron Rice, I remember being one who said they'll weaken, you know, he'll never let those bulldozers show up. This is all in the papers now and everybody. So the all these people that, you know, "Hell no, not in Newark!" Hell, you know. So the politicians were also pushing that argument. They were saying it's a bad thing. You know, these white people getting ready to come over, they gonna take over everything else. Ron Rice is saying it, Junius is saying it, the mayor and companies were saying, you know, it was anti univers- universities, nobody works at the universities from the city. They're all those white people coming in, to take over, all the jobs and everything else. I had thought that when I sat down for a variety of those folks. They would understand more. And I think from an intell- they began to understand what we were trying to do on certain levels. But on the other hand, it just didn't make sense for them to be in agreement with the uni-. It's like today, if they had agreed with the universities it would have been like, you know, going and accepting the enemy. Intheir minds, it was better to complain and point the finger rather than do anything else. And that was always my biggest frustration with all of 'em. The difference between Sharpe James versus Gibson. I think during the Sharpe James era, though, overall, he was able to get more done, than Gibson was able to get done for tons of different reasons. I think there were a lot of problems with the Al Faiellas. I think there were a lot of problems with-

Robert Curvin 1:18:32

Be more specific, what kind of problems?

George Hampton 1:18:34

Well when we look at development. Now I'm talking about development. We can talk about development we could talk about education, we could talk about health care. I mean, I can bounce all over the place, depends on where you take me. But the point is, as it relates to development. Sharpe James was able to get Hovnanian to come in and do all that development now that meant kicking out Don Harris and all his stuff that was doing things

Robert Curvin 1:19:02

Did they actually kick Don Harris out, or was it a question of his capacity to move the project further?

George Hampton 1:19:10

Well, I know more about from I guess I've talked more about it with Don Harris.

Robert Curvin 1:19:15

Yeah. Well, I would love to hear your your view on this because I've heard all kinds of different stories.

George Hampton 1:19:23

I would think ultimately that it was better to bring in Hovnanian to do what they did. All right, because they did so much so quickly. Wherein Don Harris would have taken a lot longer to have been able to do it to do more but Don Harris over the years had been knowledgeable had been the first to do a lot of this. Clearly he had vision more vision than anyone else

Robert Curvin 1:19:50

But less access to capital but

George Hampton 1:19:52

But way less access to capital. No no, no comparison, which was Junius's problem too I'm gonna jump back into University Heights, which was Junius's problem too. I didn't understand it back then. But they had no access to capital, None. But Hovnanian could come in and they could take you know, we call that space the interstitial space. But they took up and just did it all at once, phase one, phase two, phase three but large blocks at a time so there was no comparison. But Sharpe James got it done. Sharpe James got the Prudential Center done during his watch. Sharpe James was able to get the development done all along the Clinton avenues, the Springfield Avenues all that inside development that happened Sharpe James got those things now, but I had a problem with Sharpe James, but nonetheless, it was his years that did more than anything else.

Robert Curvin 1:20:43

What kind of problems?

George Hampton 1:20:44

The problem side of Sharpe James was he too was a politician, that and as such, they think politically, and it isn't always the best, programmatically what I want to do the difference between probably I want

to really make lasting change, happen. I want cities to be rebuilt, in its totality. I believe there are ways that that can happen. But it's more scientific, if you will, then just making deals with, you know, somebody who contributed to your campaign. And I think a lot of times, we don't get stuff done, because it's the deals that are made or political deals, and they therefore do not thoroughly address the issues associated with public policy. But if they had followed other paths, they could have done more with the city. I know I'm being very gentle I'm talking too many things at one time. But that's my problem. I always do that. But I'm using as examples now. Okay. On the Sharpe, James, the issues were, one of the things I wanted to get was the city of Newark to use UMDNJ, the medic- I'm jumping to health for a second, the Medical Director, why not you have the big med- medical school at UMDNJ, the biggest in the country at the time, getting ready to be much shorter. Nonetheless, at the time, why not have the medical director for the city of Newark be also the dean of New Jersey medical school? Or really why not New Jersey medical school dean also serve as the medical director for the city? Think of all the resources and sharing that suddenly could happen with that. I met on the sly with Sharpe to talk about that issue. And I said you have a medical director slot open at 110 William Street or whatever that number is. He said, I do? I said, yeah. So what do you what you need to do, what you should do, now they don't make enough money as the medical director, but I'll tell you what, that salary plus what our medical school dean is making would be great to, you know, but let's take it over, you know, not take it over but let us have the medical director be this dean and therefore, all those resources come to the city. He said, Oh, I got a spot open. Yeah, you got a spot open. He said, Okay. So are we gonna meet on this again? Yeah, yeah we'll meet on this this again. Yeah, that meeting never happened. But what happened in the meantime, he finds out he has a medical director spot

Robert Curvin 1:23:20

so he put some political appointee in.

George Hampton 1:23:22

Some wasn't even a doctor, at first, it was something else. I don't remember his title. I mean, his his education. But it was something else. It had nothing to do. Little to do. little to do with being a medical director and clearly (?) it didn't work. The Director of Health for the city had been, you know, a nurse at one time. You know. I mean, I've all those years you always had some lightweight in that director slot, when it could have been somebody of real caliber of substitute under, you know, who had all the educational background and experiences from other places, but that never happened. So we never had much heal- happening in health care in the city. And I kind of blame, no I blame I would blame Sharpe James for that. Because he had opp- more than one opportunity to make lasting change. Gibson had some least some sharp guys out of Wat- the Jim Beauford and the Bayless Walkers and all they were some sharp guys from you know, other places came in and they were doing health care. Sharpe James never thought health care was that much important. So that's a small example of the negative side of a Sharpe James.

Robert Curvin 1:24:32

But now what about this, his ethical challenges? You know, I mean, one of the interesting stories is how he contacted one of the VPS at Havanion while they were doing the development, you probably know about this and asked if they had any houses in Florida. And, and, you know, long, short story, of course, is that he ended up getting a house at a discount, in one of their developments in Florida,

George Hampton 1:25:01

Right. And that's where he kept the Rolls Royce and the _____. Well, ethical challenges, I would say, I don't know a lot about all this stuff, on the the ethical side. My assumption is, and I noticed, I have to apologize here that they were wrong. But I'm putting my my but in a sense that I think he did more good than harm. He was clearly like all of them to me. Self interested, and perhaps the the bad sides whether or not they were self interested first. Now, if that makes sense to you with everything, everything I do I do for me first, and then we'll see if it has any value to others. And you know, before I let you do this, you know, this using government funds, what's in it for me? What's in it for me? I'm assuming that he was not a what's in it for me first kind of guy. I think he was a if opportunity arose, or if they came about some kind of way, he would take those challenges. I think that's a slight difference. I don't think he was Ralph Grant. If you know what I mean. And I saw Ralph, I thought Ralph was way out the you know, first, I'm not aware of how many times James took bribes or not. I'm not aware of him doing that, you know, I mean, direct outright. But, but but from what I've heard and read, the things that Sharpe has done, to me, has been no different than what politicians were doing, especially back during that time. I think they're still doing it. And you know, the old the old excuse, which I know, those of who have significant ethics would say is, but no one can do any of it. But the excuse that I'm using is all the white people did it, why can't he, you know what, you know, I guess he did. But is that really an excuse? I mean, don't - Don't you feel that, given our history? Yes.

Robert Curvin 1:27:14

That we have a very different kind of, absolutely to use this power for the advancement of our people?

George Hampton 1:27:21

Absolutely. Absolutely. I think-

Robert Curvin 1:27:23

Well, why can't Why can't Why hasn't that? No, I mean, way. Cory Booker, at least articulates that in a way.

George Hampton 1:27:34

Right. Right. He probably he articulates more than anybody else. But the ultimate ethicist, the ultimate should be Chris Christie. I mean, to me in New Jersey, be and what I mean by that is what he did to UMDNJ and other places. How dare you take 25 have a \$25,000 part time Wayne, Brian? Yeah, I mean, I'm jumping the subject here, but the point is, but now he's a politician Chris Christie. What do you mean, you have a a group of funders who you aren't, you aren't going to tell me a name, you know, campaigns who contributed to your campaign in huge number, but we're not, you're not going to release the list. I mean, he didn't want you know, you can run down all the things that he has done. Point that I'm making simply is, once you're a politician, these things happen. And people on the outside can view them as ethical and not ethical. And what happens is, you know, you start drawing the line. So I mean, you don't draw the line, the line, frankly, the line keeps shifting, the line keeps shifting toward, you know, making personal quick and quick and personal decisions. So my argument to you, and I don't want to argue it too much, because it also said that isn't what about you and what I should I think if anything ever exonerated me, it was UMDNJ what happened there and how quickly they came

after me. And I sat there and laughed at him, because I knew I looked like low hanging fruit, when in reality, I did do nothing, because I did understand that black folk, when you're in these positions, they, they, they not only will not wait for you to do something, they will come after you, to entice you to get you to do something. And in many cases, and if that don't work, I'm a full believer that they will lie to get you out of your office, if that's what they really want to do. So you have to be pure, you have to be clean. You have to be smart enough to know not to do these things. On the other hand, I don't think most politicians are that sharp or that smart. I especially don't think most black politicians are that sharp. Now the only difference I'm making there is-

Robert Curvin 1:29:46

You're talking about Newark?

George Hampton 1:29:49

Period, because here's the point that I'm making-

Robert Curvin 1:29:51

What about Maynard Jackson? I mean, he had a vision and he he he never forgot the History of black people that all much to the discomfort of many of the business leaders, he would remind them, you know, we came from

George Hampton 1:30:09

I remember it, I would agree. I agree about Maynard Jackson. I said most. No, I did not say all. And I think that that is the big difference here. Right? I'm saying most black politicians are just as average as white politicians. All right, they're just average. And in the course of that, so white politicians are able to still get away with a lot more, and blacks at some point, assume they should be able to get away with it, because they're just average politicians themselves. And they can't. I mean, they or they can't for long, you know, and or there a few who do I think, you know, look at Robbie Regan has been around a long took 'em all this time for them now to say, okay, Rango, it's time for you to go, we had enough for you. But you know, obviously, he was hanging out with everybody else. But all and you know, he can say, but my colleagues have been doing this for years. For decades.

Robert Curvin 1:31:06

Why didn't you ever run for (office)?

George Hampton 1:31:09

I originally wanted to, a lot of folk had talked to me about that. And I thought about it long and hard. And, and, and part of it for the very reasons that you just said part of it. Not, you know, 10% 20%, which I didn't want, what I wanted, I found there were other ways of being able to do what I've what I've always been committed to do, which is, I might as well be 19 taking over boss (far as I can?) right now. I mean, my mentality that's the way I think I just use other ways of doing it. But my point is, I found we were other ways of having just as much as really, frankly, just as much influence without being that much in the public eye. I learned about being in the public eye because of the offices that I did have the appointed offices, basically. Yeah, that yeah, appointed, appointed judge appointed officers that I've had, I've learned about being in the public eye. And I also realized that the shortfalls of that the glory

isn't worth it alone with it just got to be it's not worth it. And I learned that probably in my 30s, some -- said I don't think so. I never did. I never went back. Never look back.

Robert Curvin 1:32:21

How do you think Booker is doing?

George Hampton 1:32:23

I don't think he's doing good at all. For himself I think he's doing well, you know, I mean, everybody knows this, I think for himself, Booker's gonna he's gonna to go somewhere else, and if he wants to be a celebrity, whatever it is, he's going to make it and he's going to be it. I think he's going to be every bit of Tallus smiley or wherever he wherever he's trying to go in his life Booker is going to get it.

Robert Curvin 1:32:45

What about but what about Newark what about his performance in Newark?

George Hampton 1:32:48

You saw me smirking and smiling I think he's lousy. I Oh, come on, I think it's nothing going on. Sharpe James did a whole lot more the Dev- Maybe that's why I thought of Sharpe James. Sharpe has done clearly a lot more was able to get a lot more done. Whether I like him or not. He did what Booker's been able to do. Booker just does not understand. He's, you know, he's an empty suit. I mean, he's a nice guy. And people love him because he is so articulate. Oh, the words just (low?). You know and white people really love that. And, you know, the intellectual, you know, college educated we all Oh, look it up him the words. Oh, the words the words. But outside of giving you words, what is it that he can do? Or what has he proven? Has been a has now proven to do? I'm still waiting. I don't see it yet.

Robert Curvin 1:33:40

Okay, let me give you you know, at the risk of sounding like I'm an advocate for

George Hampton 1:33:45

Give me the BS about the crime go head, number one.

Robert Curvin 1:33:49

\$100 million in grants even before the Facebook gift, \$140 million so far on the on the education, fundraising. Development of the network of family support centers, attention to some of the green issues in the city and a planning process for the riverfront, which,

George Hampton 1:34:14

which was done was prior to his coming but go head, but he was a Gold- Gold- Larry Goldberg and company as well as well as the city and the business community, but keep going.

Robert Curvin 1:34:26

But anyway, he kept it going. And he put much more emphasis on it. And the idea of creating all these tours and getting people to go down and take a ride and look up look at the river on Saturdays and all that. I would also say that the economy really rocked him in a way that is not his fault. That is not his

fault. But even in the context of lousy lousy economy. There were a few things that he allowed to have to happen. I mean, I think bring- bringing Tony Griffin in was a good idea, even though she was not terribly happy about that.

George Hampton 1:35:11

Perfect example. Yeah. What about her boss? Was that a good idea?

Robert Curvin 1:35:14

Her what?

George Hampton 1:35:15

Her boss. Who? Stephan Fryer? Bringing him on? Was that a good idea.

Robert Curvin 1:35:18

No, I What do you think about that?

George Hampton 1:35:21

He's a lightweight, he's almost a dunce. But go ahead, keep talking.

Robert Curvin 1:35:26

Okay. Okay. But anyway, I

George Hampton 1:35:29

How come you didn't mention crime. Why didn't you say that he did so much great with crime? I'll be quite honest.

Robert Curvin 1:35:33

I didn't say it.

George Hampton 1:35:34

I know you didn't. I kept saying, why did you not say that. That's the one that generally white people tell me.

Robert Curvin 1:35:40

I will show you the data.

George Hampton 1:35:42

You don't have to. You already know then that's why, go ahead.

Robert Curvin 1:35:45

Yeah, I know I have I have a I have an analysis that you haven't seen on the crime that I'll show you in a minute, actually, when we finish, but the point is, is that I'm not mentioning crime. I would also say, though, that I don't think McCarthy is a bad choice to run the department. And now that Julia Neils has taken over the VA job, I think that's a good move for the city. But I and I just I think that there are some,

you know, some shady things that have happened around him. But I don't think he's the kind of guy that's going to be led out of the city hall in handcuffs.

George Hampton 1:36:26

I don't either.

Robert Curvin 1:36:27

Yeah.

George Hampton 1:36:28

So he's the most out of that all of all, the mayors who have been in Newark. He'd be the last. Well, I'm gonna go with you. I don't think he will be brought up on any kind of ethical charges directly. I don't think that's going to happen.

Robert Curvin 1:36:43

Right. But he's got some-

George Hampton 1:36:44

Illegal charges - everybody's got (unintelligable) the young ...it's what I was talking about earlier.

Robert Curvin 1:36:52

So you you so let me ask this last question.

George Hampton 1:36:56

All right.

Robert Curvin 1:36:59

What's the future for Newark? It's been a week on that one, huh?

George Hampton 1:37:12

I'm scared .

Robert Curvin 1:37:13

Your scared?

George Hampton 1:37:14

I don't want to um, wow. That came out of the blue. I could deal with it. I'm scared. I'm scared because when I first off when you say Newark, if you're referring to what's going to be elected or mayors and stuff at HQ, I don't I never had much confidence. I guess that's obvious. In any of them anyway, but I especially expect less to happen. You I expect Cory to go on and do some other things. And then after Cory? I don't see anybody right now in the wings. Maybe? Maybe Donald Payne Jr. I don't know.

Robert Curvin 1:37:54

Mmm-hmm.

George Hampton 1:37:55

But anyway, I don't see any things in the immediate wings. But the city -

Robert Curvin 1:37:58

What about Ron Rice Jr.?

George Hampton 1:37:59

Maybe Ron Rice Jr. I like Ron Rice Jr.

Robert Curvin 1:38:02

Or Darren Sharif.

George Hampton 1:38:04

I'm afraid of Darren, I like Darren Sharif, but I'm worried about how much influence his father has over him. No, that that put out all that I liked all that I like. But I had to, I gotta think about it. My first. What first came to me when you asked me Newark wasn't politics, but the city itself and what's happening. My fear with the city right now is the issue of because of the economy. What I saw happening in the last eight years, 10 years, 12 years was Newark's economy was finally growing again. Now and when I say these things, I'm referring to it a little bit more scientifically. What I mean by that is I used to again I would I did those studies, like from background studies back in the past, with Newark Collaboration Group which show let's do some baseline data, find out where the economy is now - the economy the real economy - people don't talk about this. They talk about other stuff. They give you inferences, but they don't give you reality by numbers, where the baseline is, and let's project where it's going to go into the future. Let's see what happens. So of course, Sharpe James, I was Newark collaboration group chairman Sharpe James took that and crushed it all cause he heard numbers and he's afraid of numbers. But the economy started to grow. Newark's economy was doing better. More jobs were happening. In all the sectors not just necessarily in government sector, but in the sectors the economy was growing for a while. Houses. I couldn't believe it. Houses in Newark, going for \$500,000. In Newark! In the West Ward! Down the street from UMDNJ or these little back streets. There was a time post Riot at As you know, I did the study the red lining study to show how mortgaging activity was doing like this before the uh riot. The riot happened. No mortgaging activity. You did numbers, you saw it, the population was here. Well, in the 8-85ish, 90ish it started going back up, well, slowing down, but at a slower pace. I think the year was 2000 was the first year that had actually shown in Newark's a population, a slight increase in degree, it was only like 1012. But I can't remember the exact number.

Robert Curvin 1:40:39

Well it look like it stabilized actually wasn't an increase. It was more of a stabilization.

George Hampton 1:40:44

But I think the number was like 1700 more people living in Newark in 2000

Robert Curvin 1:40:48

_____went up a little bit. And on the estimates, the American Community Survey estimates went up a little bit.

George Hampton 1:40:54

But my point, we're still in the same spot, you and I, which is things finally, and then from between 2000 and 2006 You're looking around, and you're like "Whoa, houses are going up." And people are moving houses were being sold. Before they were finished being built. People there weren't even for sale signs anywhere. How great it was to see these things finally happening in the city of Newark, you could walk things to University Heights master plan one, thank you very much from UMDNJ, to Essex County College on its- and feel comfortable and safe. Couldn't do that back in the 80s. Not that little bit of a distance wouldn't do it. Things were better things you saw this I mean, you then came to the recession depression Call it what you will, you know, and now I see first I'm starting to I'm starting to see boarded up houses again. The vacant lots that's going to be next will be the vacant lots again, but the boarded up houses and now then after the boarded up houses now starting to see burnt houses they used to call it Jewish lightning. Lightning, you know, it's it's striking all these houses getting burnt up so you can drive down streets in Newark, if you could look at the foreclosure data, I want to get stuff prior I want you to give it to me, I want to get the foreclosure data of the city of Newark to see how many foreclosures are happening. And because of what I did see from one developer who had some of this information, there will be blocks where there in the South Ward Clinton Avenue section area between Bergen and more or less Clinton place all up in there, there are blocks and blocks where on that total block it would be 50. Let's just say 30 houses for the sake of the argument 30 houses 18 of them will be at some level of foreclose and it wouldn't just be that one block, it will be the block in front of it, the block behind it, the block one on each side of it and the blocks that goes down the block foreclosures everywhere. What's my point? Newark is back into the declining stages again, economically. And you know, you could have the Mayor get in front of papers all day long and talk about how wonderful he's doing some. I call him good (unintelligible). Those what you named to me. Were goody two shoe programs. That's what I call them. Goody two shoe programs because you know, the problem. All these what are the problems, as as you know, is this issue about we did supportive work programs back when I (unintelligible) Newark State but they call it something else today, I forgot the term. But anyway, the point is, people are getting out of the prisons, they're coming back into

Robert Curvin 1:43:35

prisoner prisoner release, entry

George Hampton 1:43:38

Reentry reentry. They're coming back into the cities in these large numbers. And then the mayor will say I have a reentry program. Yeah. You took care of five criminals, ex offenders they're criminals anymore? You took your 10. Yeah, you took your 10. But the problem is here, that that's what I call everything that you need as a goody two shoe program. \$100 million a year. 100 million dollars. Education System. 100 million dollars. Yeah, sure. New money. Oh, that's great. And it is (unintelligible). You can do a lot with \$100 million. Don't get me wrong. So I'm all for that. But \$100 million dollars over a five year period is only \$20 million a year. You didn't win a \$1 billion, 1 billion plus school budget. \$5 million dollars. I mean, \$20 million dollars, ain't much compared to one 1 billion plus school budget. So I'm not taking away from it.

Robert Curvin 1:44:26

But it's discretionary.

George Hampton 1:44:27

If it's discretionary. You're right.

Robert Curvin 1:44:28

That's that's a big, big difference. But we're really not talking about 100 million for the School we're talking

George Hampton 1:44:35

200 If you do the combination.

Robert Curvin 1:44:36

200. And he's talked about his other extra 50 that he's going to add. I mean, I'm, you know, in truth, pretty much where you are. But I want to give you another argument.

George Hampton 1:44:46

I heard those arguments. I mean, I think you've see it, I'm with you. I understand. And I'm not against it. Let me if somebody said you know, give give George 100 million for the school system, I'd be like sure I tell you what I can do. But I'm with you. Go 'head.

Robert Curvin 1:45:02

Let me let me give you one though angle on this analysis that is very helpful. But one angle is that in the previous downturn of the city, it was just happening to Newark, while other cities were growing and getting better. In this particular case, the urban decline is a national phenomenon, because of the economy.

George Hampton 1:45:32

I think the

Robert Curvin 1:45:34

the brakes that have been put on development have been put on development in a lot of other places, except for places like New York and Chicago. But for for many cities, I mean, you look at the data.

George Hampton 1:45:46

I agree.

Robert Curvin 1:45:47

Things are things are really bad off. Unemployment...

George Hampton 1:45:50

All over. No, no, no, no, but but I guess I guess we're at this first off I agree with with what's been happening today is happening throughout the throughout the country. There's a couple points, I guess I do need to clarify on that. But in the past when things were happening bed in the city, they also happened badf throughout the country. Now here's what- I mean, my urban planning urban studies I that's what I did, we would study other cities and all of them out mig- people were moving to the suburbs, we all know that. And now there's been a change. And there's been gentrification happening in other places now, but today, I guess my concern about Newark, is what's going to happen to it in the future, while places like Jersey City has been able to recover this time around, and the Bayonnes. And the Hobokens recovering from even been bad times. The Newark, I'm worried about whether or not there was a period when it was starting to grow a little bit, but now, I mean, come on, the jewel of Newark, 744 Broad Street - Stern is in foreclosure! I mean, you know, and all that other stuff that never happened never happened. And I'm not sure if it will. Now I've talked to developers. Ron Bates, I don't know how much you--. And, you know, I got all his plans and we're scheming on some stuff.

Robert Curvin 1:47:16

You're working with him.

George Hampton 1:47:18

Sort of when we were talking now. We probably -- I'll see if we ended up really working together. But we're talking now about different stuff cause he's reached out to me, he knows about my university background and how I'm trying to coordinate University Heights. But back to you. I mean, I've giving this is your thing.

Robert Curvin 1:47:38

Okay. No, this has been really very helpful. But you, I, you know, the Jersey City is interesting, because it's done very pretty well, as you, as you know, but you know, you're look at the difference in the employment structure. The city, the city is about pretty close to the same size as Newark.

George Hampton 1:48:06

It is, in fact, it's grown. The population has grown.

Robert Curvin 1:48:09

In fact, the new census data, they get even closer.

George Hampton 1:48:13

They've been threatening Jersey City has been an area that's been threatening to, you know, compete and grow outgrow Newark for the last 20 years. And now they are very close.

Robert Curvin 1:48:21

And you know, what the number of public employees in Jersey City are as compared to Newark? 2500 Compared to 4000 in Newark, prior to the layoffs

George Hampton 1:48:37

Right Newark used to have as many as 6, 7000.

Robert Curvin 1:48:40

So you're talking about a very, very substantial padding and bloating of the bureaucracies in the city. Newark's tax situation and budget situation is, in my view, really the big threat in the city.

George Hampton 1:49:00

I would agree. And because the not only that, but their ability to the city's ability to to collect is so bad and these are the things that don't get talked about,

Robert Curvin 1:49:11

Yeah no and I agree. And, you know, fortunately, to some degree, those are the kinds of things that you can fix. The deeper problems are really structural, and entrenched and very hard to, to fix.

George Hampton 1:49:26

Well, that was one of the problems with City- That's why I got so disenchanted with City Hall too was that even the people sitting in those positions. They were I learned very early that they were there waiting for the next election map,

Robert Curvin 1:49:38

Right.

George Hampton 1:49:39

You know, so that they could then come out and get get their boss reelected. And then they would sit and have these great jobs and not know what to do with em. That's That's true

Robert Curvin 1:49:50

We're gonna stop there.

George Hampton 1:49:51

I'm fine.

Robert Curvin 1:49:51

You okay?

George Hampton 1:49:52

I'm good.